

CONNECTION

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NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND CONFERENCE

EVANGELISM: It's Back



Message From The President

By Bob Cundiff



ATLANTIC UNION CONSTITUENCY

The following Devotional is a distillation of remarks delivered by Pastor Bob Cundiff on May 19, 2019 at the Atlantic Union College Constituency meeting. The two major items on the agenda was, first, to report that the Atlantic Union College had lost its charter and that the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (MDHE) had revoked our license to operate the college, and second, to receive a recommendation from the Board of Trustees to begin to find a buyer or buyers for the majority of properties on the college campus.

I have thought long and hard about what to share today by way of this morning's devotional. I flirted with the temptation to do the safe thing. You know what the safe thing is? It's to pull an old "feel good" devotional from the yellow pages and punt the ball of the more difficult topics to those leaders who will follow me on this platform later today. You know why they are called the yellow pages? It's because the presentation is so old that the pages turn yellow! Perhaps it's not a bad strategy but it just didn't feel like an integrity move.

My course decided, I contemplated a number of passages in the Bible that talk about God's comfort, care and leading. Those are good and we need that encouragement today. I also thought about other passages that focus on the role of leadership in times of transition, change and difficulty. That's good stuff too, and maybe a little of that is also appropriate for today.

But to speak honestly, none of those topics really connected with my heart in a meaningful way. On some level, they felt like I would be dodging the weightier topics that we have come here to wrestle with. The reality is that we have come to do a little grieving together today. Candor requires us to recognize that AUC will never be what it was.

Grieving. Now there's a topic I understand. I've been doing a lot of that as of late. You see, I lost my father 27 days ago. And it was not fun. Here's what I want to do for the next few minutes. I want to talk about his death. And then I want to talk about another death that is currently taking place. And then I want to draw contrasts and lessons from those two deaths that may be helpful for us in our current context today.

First, Dad. It's a sad story really. My father had what therapists call the "A's". Alcoholism, abuse, addiction, atheism, adultery. The list goes on. And as the years passed and the darkness settled in more and more deeply, his world got smaller and smaller. Relationships became more and more strained and one by one he began to push people out of his life. Getting close to Dad was like trying to hug a cactus. This led to him managing his final stage of life very poorly. As the roots of hopelessness grew deeper, he became miserly and a bit of a hoarder. There was an unhealthy obsession with hanging on to things and trying to manage people to get his needs met.

There was tremendous anxiety and

fear about when and how he would die and who would take care of him when he could no longer take care of himself. In his mind, the thought of going to a skilled care facility was completely out of the question because he was afraid they would take his alcohol away. So that addiction and fear kept him home, miserable and lonely.

Now as you can imagine, because my family is so dysfunctional, there have been copious doses of family drama, difficulty and confusion during the time of his death, memorial service and now during the distribution of his small estate. It's a sad story. Truly.

But I also want to tell you about another death. My best friend is in the process of losing his mother even as we speak. She, in contrast, is a believer. She has lived her life well. She was generous and open handed with her resources, her time and her talents. She loves the Lord deeply and raised her children to do the same.

I've been close to him and his family as they have prepared for this loss. I've functioned as a pastor to the family and tried to find the ways I could be the most supportive and encouraging without being in the way. My most recent pastoral visit with her was on a Sabbath afternoon. She was surrounded by friends, church family and her own children. There was a lot of love, laughter and joy in the room.

In the midst of that loving chaos she and I wound up in a corner together and she signaled me that she wanted to talk. As a pastor, I'm trained to understand that these are incredibly important moments. In these moments, people often tackle major life tasks like confessing sin, reaching out to estranged family, wrestling with a lack of assurance of salvation or revisiting God's forgiveness in their own lives. As such, when she signaled me, I was all ears! So, what did she want to talk about? She wanted to talk about Jesus. She wanted to talk about heaven.



Photo by Atlantic Union Communication Director, Ednor Davison.



Photo by Atlantic Union Communication Director, Ednor Davison.

She wanted to talk about getting a new body where she would no longer have pain.

She wanted to talk about how beautiful she would be as she danced on the sea of glass and tossed her golden, jewel laden crown at the feet of Jesus. She wanted to talk about what it would be like when we no longer see through a glass darkly but see face to face, when we know fully even as we are fully known.

It was one of those pastoral visits where you intend to be a blessing, but when you walk away you realize you are the blessings recipient rather than its giver. She taught me an important life lesson: there is a way to die well, and there is a way to die poorly.

Let's draw on a few insights from these two experiences that may be helpful for us today. First, a good death recognizes reality. It fights the urge to find comfort in denial. Leadership mentor John Maxwell says that one of the tasks of leadership is to understand and then define reality for those we lead. He goes on to warn that is not always a fun or comfortable task. But good leadership seeks to do that well. It seeks to recognize reality and respond to that reality in the most God honoring, respectful and appropriate way possible.

Secondly, those who respond to death in a meaningful way resist the urge to cast blame, point fingers, criticize and degrade others. The oddest things

happen sometimes at funerals. Both as a pastor and now as a son who has lost his father, I have witnessed family members at funerals and had to scratch my head and wonder, "Why do they have to behave that way right now? This is a stressful time, it's a sensitive time, and it's a vulnerable time." But many times, the death event is marked by those who cannot resist the urge to blame or castigate others for what they think are their failures.

And to move the application closer to our own context here today... wisdom would require us to recognize the complexities of a dynamic organization like a Union Conference where leadership changes frequently, where administrations come and go, where there is an intricate relationship between the Union office and the 6 Conferences, the higher organizations, the accrediting bodies, the college board, and the complicated dynamics of changing demographics and a changing economy. Those who would oversimplify the difficult task of decision-making in that landscape tip the rest of us off that they do not have an appropriate grasp on the challenges that have faced the ministry of Atlantic Union College. I question the value of speeches that carry a tone of, "If only you had listened to me or done thus and so."

It's been said that success has a thousand fathers, but failure is an orphan. Good leaders give credit away and adopt orphans. That's a Godly response even in the midst of loss and

heartache such as we experience here today. Let us recognize reality today with grace, tact and a magnanimous Christian charity.

Thirdly, a good death – a good funeral – brings families together. I've seen families do funerals very, very well. Those are the funerals that transition quickly from a family funeral to a family reunion. What we do here today does not have to be an event that divides, angers, separates and brings division for future generations.

(At this point, Bob Cundiff turned to face the Atlantic Union President who was seated on the platform.) Dr. Knight, do I speak accurately on behalf of this Union office and on behalf of the administrations of the 6 Conferences when I say that we want that? That we do not want this to be an event that divides, separates, ruins relationships and inhibits the Lord's work? It doesn't have to do that. If it does then Satan wins the last round. Let's not give up that good ground today. If we do, then we are responsible for that. We made that decision. That is not something that someone else imposed on us, but we made that choice. I'm for a better choice.

Today, I intend to stand and hold on to that good ground. I do not intend to concede that ground to the evil one. And my commitment to you is this: at the end of this day, I intend to hold that good ground. I intend to hold it even if I stand there all alone. But I don't want to

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Message from the Executive Secretary

By Ted Huskins



A LIFE WORTHY OF EMULATION

Should we really be doing Evangelism?

Our world is becoming increasingly polarized and at times it seems our denomination is following the example of the world. There is a polarization that I have encountered numerous times within the church. Some people think the primary mission of the church is evangelism. Other people believe the primary mission of the church is *their* personal character development and spiritual transformation.

At the extremes of these polarizations we find the following imaginary churches:

Super Relevant Church believes evangelism is so important that we should consider any and every methodology to introduce people to Christ. These folks think nothing is too extreme and everything is on the table. They'll have rock bands in leather pants, circus performers during offering collection, and pepperoni pizza at potluck if that's

what it takes. They only concern themselves with leading people to Jesus. Seeing new converts transform into the character of Christ is not important, it is exclusively about leading people to accept Christ as their savior. They believe their mission is to do that over and over again and baptize as many people as they possibly can.

Super Holy Church believes character transformation is the purpose of the church. They think there are only a handful of truly, honest-hearted people who are going to make it to heaven, and they want to be among those who do. They believe their mission is to make sure *they* get to heaven. All of their programming is for them, and their priority is to protect themselves lest they be contaminated by worldly people with worldly ideas. In their view, evangelism shouldn't even be considered because new people will just be Laodicean and further corrupt the church. In their view, a new convert must *believe* and *behave* before they will ever let them *belong*.

Have you seen this particular polarization? Are you a part of it? Which camp are you in? If you're in the *Super Holy church*, you are going to be suspicious of anyone who doesn't share your mission of character transformation. If you're in the *Super Relevant Church* you are going to consider anyone who doesn't share your mission irrelevant and out of touch with the real world. So, what is the answer? Which group is right?

The answer of course is that both groups are wrong. First of all, any Christian that fails to understand the importance of spiritual transformation (also known as sanctification), is missing out on one of the most amazing blessings of being a Christ follower. Let me put it this way –let's imagine you find a '66 Mustang convertible that doesn't run, with faded paint, rusted fenders and a



tattered interior. You take that car to a restoration specialist and pay \$50,000 for a frame-off restoration. If they return the car in exactly the same condition, would that be acceptable? No, any sane person would tell you that's not ok. One of the great promises of Christianity is that we don't have to continue to be slaves to sin. We want to see some evidence that our connection and relationship with the Lord is life changing. Please understand this is a delicate balance of trust, training and transformation. We trust the Lord to accomplish a good work in us. We put ourselves in situations and practice the spiritual disciplines of prayer and Bible study all in the expectation that He will perform a good work in us and that we will reflect the character of Christ.

But get this – a vital and important spiritual discipline that leads to character transformation is in fact evangelism. Jesus made it abundantly clear that it is impossible to love God if we don't love other people. Sanctification doesn't happen in isolation. Sanctification happens in community. If we aren't allowing Christ to shine through our lives in a compelling fashion that leads others to want what we have, then we must

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A PASSIONATE ARGUMENT

By Trevor Schlisner

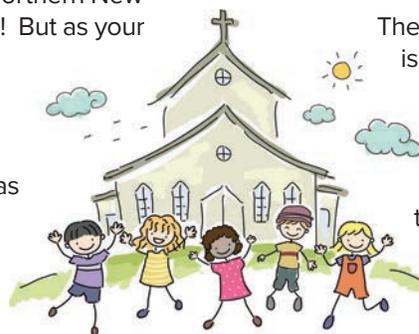
Let me start by acknowledging that I have a strong bias in favor of our schools. That done, I want to advance the idea that our schools are the most effective form of evangelism in the conference. Think about it for a minute: If we hold a community outreach event, we see people once or twice. If community members decide to come to our church regularly, we see them once a week. But when community children and our own children go to our schools, our teachers see them five days a week and have an opportunity to deeply teach them about Jesus. Sometimes our teachers see them six days a week when the community students attend church.

I have seen so many situations where one student in our schools has led the entire family to accept Christ. I've been approached by parents who ask for Bible studies because they can't answer the questions their child started asking once they attended one of our schools. I've watched as parents and grandparents attend school programs to watch their student, and end up being so impressed with the teachers and school that they start asking serious and thoughtful questions about what Adventists believe.

I'm passionate about Christian education and I'm passionate about the 12 schools we have in this conference. I consider them to be the crown jewels in our efforts to reach people with the message of Christ. In this case, the people we reach are our own kids and those kids from the community that we can recruit to join our schools. And of course, when we reach the kid we also reach the parents and grandparents. Because

I'm so passionate, because I believe our teachers are the best evangelists we have, let me make my argument to you: Include education in your evangelism plans, and include it in a big way.

Praise the Lord that evangelism is on the rebound in the Northern New England Conference! But as your church makes plans for its evangelism over the next 12-18 months, please include your school as part of your plan. If, for instance, you had to completely subsidize the tuition of a community student to make it possible to attend, that would likely be evangelism dollars well spent. But there is more that can be done! When you have a community outreach event, how about involving



the students and introducing your school to the community members who attend? That would go a long way to creating greater awareness of the school and may end up helping you recruit a student to the school. At a minimum, it would get our students more involved in evangelism!

The bottom line for me is that we have the most dedicated, most spiritual, most amazing teachers I've ever seen and they are guiding and mentoring the most amazing students I've ever seen.

These teachers, and these students, are probably the best and most effective tool available for evangelism if we will only be intentional and prayerful about putting them to work!

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do it alone. I want us to do it together! So, I invite you. I appeal to you to hold that good ground with me today. At the end of this day, let us find ourselves firmly entrenched there! Let's take a moment to take a step back. Am I painting lipstick on a pig this morning? Is the essence of this message just one of, 'Why can't we all just get along?' with a little bit of "Love, Love, Love" and a good dose of denial thrown in?

No. These losses hurt. I get that. But you can do a loss well. Just because you suffer a loss does not mean that you are not on task with mission. You can do mission even while wrestling with a loss.

Here's a little wisdom from basketball legend Michael Jordan. "I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times I've been trusted to take the game

winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."

So, it's possible to face a loss and use that loss as a platform to find success. Just because we don't have a college does not mean we can't do mission. It doesn't mean that we cannot design a new delivery system of Adventist higher education in our Union. Yes, this campus was a way in which we did mission, but it is not the only way we can do mission.

That's a healthy discussion for us to have as a family. In healthy families, the family doesn't stop being a family, and they don't stop nurturing family relationships just because there is a funeral. And we are not going to do that either. Because we are going to be a healthier family with that. That's my challenge to you. That's where I'm headed, that's where this administration is headed and we invite you to accompany us on that journey.

GETTING INTENTIONAL ABOUT EVANGELISM

By Scott Christiansen

Evangelism is all about faith, but before that, it's all about trust. Let me explain by asking you to put yourself in the shoes of someone – a non-Adventist and probably a non-Christian – who has come into contact with our message. Before they take a close look at the message, they will likely take a close look at the messengers. Put another way, before they decide if they can put their faith in the message, they will decide if they can put their trust in the messengers.

Remember what is at stake here: Our message is radical, and it radicalizes those who accept it. Those who accept the Gospel of Christ are changing their world-view and their culture. In a sense, they become strangers in a familiar land. The Gospel of Christ is so radical and transformational that people will (and should) test every aspect of it before they accept it. And before that, they'll cautiously, carefully, and repeatedly probe the messengers – they'll get to know us.

It is precisely because we are seeking to introduce post-Christians to an entirely different world-view that our evangelism is more deliberate and intentional than it once was. That is to say, the evangelism process now starts with a whole array of community outreach – food banks, cooking classes, health seminars, short evangelism series, etc., are just a few examples of the type of outreach that allows people to hear a small part of our message while they get to know us. Such activities create a “safe space” where people can test whether our message is reflected in our actions. If it is, and if people are exposed to us repeatedly, then they can get past the “trust” issue and begin to wrestle with the Holy Spirit on the “faith” issue.



Martin teaching a cooking class.

There is a process of intentionally reaching out to a community and building relationships over a period and holding an evangelism series to bring people face-to-face with Christ. This process is called “cyclical evangelism” because each step in the cycle is usually repeated each year, usually with great success. In the Northern New England Conference, there is a recognition that each individual church will probably be challenged to come up with excellent community outreach programs that build relationships. So, the Evangelism Department has partnered with our Health Ministries Department to come up with a series of programs that can be held at any church as part of that church's cyclical evangelism plan. These programs include:

- **A Plant-based, Indian food cooking class taught by Martin Raj** – this class has been filling fellowship halls with community members!
- **Vegan Mexican food cooking class taught by Scott Christiansen** – this is a new offering that will likely be popular in a region where there is little mui autentico Mexican

food! Usually the cooking classes are held to introduce community members to the church. The instructors promote the projects below during the cooking class and encourage people to sign up.

- **The Healing Project, taught by Martin Raj** – this program uses church members to teach community members how to treat aches and pains with hydrotherapy. The project creates strong relationships between church members, pastors, and community members.
- **Reversing diabetes, taught by a Health Ministries volunteer** – this program is still being assembled, but it will directly address an epidemic in our communities. Participants are recruited from the community and from the cooking classes and healing project.
- **The Twisted Kingdom short series, taught by Bob Cundiff** – this short series focuses on family health and relationship health by exploring the great controversy between Christ and Satan through the Bible, tracing what we were meant to be, understanding how sin has twisted our world and our

families, and understanding how Christ came to untwist us and free us from sin. This practical short series is a huge blessing to families that also lays the foundation for understanding some of the major themes presented in an evangelism series.

➤ **Planet In Distress short series, taught by Scott Christiansen**

– This series connects the dots between what is happening in the natural world with the effects of sin and the fulfillment of prophecy. It connects today's headlines with what Jesus said would happen and is an excellent last step before an evangelism series.

By the time community members have been through a few introductory outreaches and perhaps to one or more health seminars or short series, they are familiar with the church, familiar with the pastor, and familiar with at least some of the members. In other words, they are past the trust issue and ready to grapple with the faith issue.



Scott presenting Planet in Distress.

Right now, there are eight churches or districts in the conference that are planning on mounting vigorous cyclical evangelism campaigns. For more about these churches, read the “Leading The Charge” article in this section. Many of these eight churches are able to launch quickly because they are partnering in the Voice of Prophecy Discovery Church program. And for more on this excellent

program, read “The VOP Model” article in this section.

Cyclical evangelism gives us a steady way to preach the Gospel. After all, we are proclaiming a dangerous, radical, and transformational message and it should be well thought out. Going slow and steady and letting people warm to us and our message is the most effective path forward.

A Life Worthy of Emulation
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ask ourselves, “Am I really growing?”

To delay or avoid sharing our faith in our quest for transformation is a never-ending cycle of frustration. We will never fully realize the character of Christ reproduced in us (as Ellen White says), unless we are loving people who love others enough to share the good news of salvation, embracing people wherever and however we find them. We should model Jesus' methodology. He accepted everyone. In the community of believers who followed Him everyone belonged. Changed belief and behavior were natural products of a life lived in connection with Him,

not a prerequisite for connecting with Him. We must reverse the tendency to screen others out of our communities because they don't ‘fit in’ or don't believe or behave exactly like we do. Through the course of a lifetime as people lived in proximity to Jesus, their lives changed and their beliefs and behavior changed as well. It is a subtle but important distinction.

Paul makes this connection between transformation and evangelism abundantly clear in Philippians 2:14-16 “Do everything without murmuring or questioning [the providence of God], so that you may prove yourselves to be blameless *and* guileless, innocent *and* uncontaminated, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you are seen as bright

lights [beacons shining out clearly] in the world [of darkness], holding out *and* offering to everyone the word of life.”

Dear friends, it is my hope and prayer that we can evident in the world and larger church context around us. God isn't calling us to be polarized – He is in fact calling us to *Connect with Christ and Others*. That means that as we are connected with Christ, we will be patient and gentle with each other. We will find a balanced view rather than falling into one unbalanced camp or the other, and finally, our love and connection with God will spill out onto the people we associate with and they will want what we have. That, my friends, is a life worth emulating and what I want for each of us.

LEADING THE CHARGE

By **Scott Christiansen**

We say in bold letters that “Evangelism is Back” in NNEC. Are we making much of little? Well, take a moment to consider the context, then decide for yourself. In the past few years, there have been only a couple churches or districts that faithfully prepared for, then held, an evangelism series. There are as many as ten churches that are doing this right now (eight going forward, two in decision mode). Take a look at which churches are making a massive commitment to evangelism in 2019, 2020, and beyond:

- Woodstock, Maine: Woodstock is using the VOP Discovery Church framework and plans to have their major evangelism series in the fall of 2020.
- Rochester, New Hampshire: Rochester is using the VOP Discovery Church framework and is on a tear – they will have their major evangelism series in the spring of 2020.
- Manchester, New Hampshire: Manchester has partnered with Tekoa Missions for canvassing support and presenting evangelist support. They will have their major series in the fall of this year.
- Portland (White Memorial), Maine: Portland is using the VOP Discovery Church framework and will hold their major evangelism series in the fall of 2020.
- Ellsworth, Maine: Ellsworth is using the VOP framework and is immediately deploying the VBS program for this summer that is part of that framework. Their major evangelism series is planned for fall of 2020.
- Concord, New Hampshire: Concord has not made their final decision about joining in the VOP framework. Their major series is

YOUR EVANGELISM OFFERINGS AT WORK!

Your Evangelism Committee recently voted to support cyclical evangelism at each of the above churches by providing:

- \$3,000 in one-to-one match funding to support advertising and holding an array of community outreach series, health programs, and seminars that lead up to the evangelism series.
- \$12,000 in one-to-one match funding to support advertising and holding a culminating major evangelism series.
- \$600 in one-to-one match funding for the yearly fee for participating in the VOP Discovery Church program.

Thank you for your support of evangelism in NNEC!

tentatively planned for fall of 2020.

- Brattleboro (Mountain View) Vermont: Brattleboro is using the VOP framework and will be holding their major evangelism series in the fall of 2020.
- Conway, New Hampshire: Conway is the home church of former NNEC evangelist, Rick Kuntz. His consummate skill will be put to work when the church holds their major series in the spring of 2020.

Ted Huskins, Evangelism Coordinator

for NNEC, commented on the wave of evangelism that is building in the conference. “I’m hoping and praying that this is just the start – that these churches will practice true cyclical evangelism where they undertake a pattern of building relationships, witnessing, and harvesting souls each year. I’m also hoping and praying that other churches will join them and that we will only increase our evangelism activities. It is, after all, the primary reason our sisterhood of churches exists.”

THE VOP FRAMEWORK

By **Scott Christiansen**

The Voice of Prophecy has been broadcasting the Bible truth since 1929. But this old dog still has some new tricks as can be seen from the impressive Discovery Church program that VOP recently rolled out to an enthusiastic audience at the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists headquarters in Columbia, Maryland. The Discovery Church framework includes most of the tools needed for churches to hold their own outreach and evangelism programs, including:

- Pre-packaged, turn-key outreach programs including a spectacular VBS program that is supported by national advertising and podcasts.
- A pre-packaged major evangelism series each year (Shadow Kingdom, Pale Horse Rides, etc.) including spectacular graphics, supported by national advertising and a national referral network that directs interests to participating churches.
- The “Bible Discovery School” that trains church members how to give Bible studies and actively support the evangelism campaign, including a referral network for guiding those interested in Bible

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WHAT IS OLD IS NEW AGAIN

By Scott Christiansen,
NNEC Evangelist

If you talk to a cross-section of people in the Adventist Church about evangelism, it won't take you long to find that many hold the view that evangelism just doesn't work anymore. They'll say something like "Evangelism meetings are old-fashioned – nobody goes to things like that anymore." Or, you might find someone who says that people still listen, but we need to change our message so it engages them. They might say something like, "If we want people to listen to us, then we need to have an upbeat message. We need to leave out all the prophecy stuff and have a message that makes people feel good."

Well... okay. But if you seek out some seasoned observers of evangelism within the church, you'll likely get a different message, and it will probably go something like this: "People are still seeking truth. Even though the world is ever more distracted and turbulent, people are still seeking truth. And the truth is that prophecy is being fulfilled before our eyes and Jesus is coming very soon. When people realize that, and understand just what Jesus and His kingdom of love represents, it is transformational." And you have to go no further than our own conference president, Bob Cundiff, to get another insightful view. "Back in the day, when tent meetings were very successful," he'll say, "they were held in the context of a prevailing Christian culture. Most people had some Bible knowledge. What the tent meetings were effectively doing was taking someone who was, say, a '5' on a scale of a 1 to 10 relationship with Jesus, and moving them to a '7' or an '8'. In our post-Christian society of today, we're trying to move people

from a '1' or '2' to a '7' or an '8'. This is a huge change, and it is accomplished over a longer time period, and with more effort and support, than a single series of meetings."

Actually, if you stand back and analyze what is being said by people in our church who deeply understand evangelism, they are saying that there was never a time when we needed to engage in evangelism more, or a time when people were more ready to hear our message, or a time when the proclamation of the gospel was more urgent! The difference, they'll tell you, is that we have to cut through the noise of the world and start building relationships earlier in the evangelism process by ministering to the needs of people and introducing them slowly to our Christian community. By this means, we can help them begin to understand and unfold the gospel while they build a relationship with Christ. Ironically, this following of Christ's method is how evangelism is supposed to be done, so when it

comes to evangelism that works today, what is old is new again.

The bottom line is that, in the world we live in today, there are more steps necessary to create interest in people who do not know Christ, and then more steps necessary again for them to take to complete their journey (or, rather, to solidly begin their journey). So, yes, evangelism indeed still works but you have to do it right. With that in mind, you will perhaps be encouraged to read the "Leading The Charge" article in this section about the many churches in NNEC that are ramping up significant evangelism campaigns with a determination to do it right. And you might be interested to read the "Getting Intentional About Evangelism" article in this section that helps define what "doing it right" actually entails.

Please be encouraged and at the very least take this one message away: Evangelism still works – it is still our primary mission as a church and it is on the resurgence in NNEC.

The VOP Framework article continued from pg. 8

- studies to participating churches.
- Sophisticated interest tracking software that keeps track of each contact, tracks how that contact is responding, prompts communication with the contact, generates invitations to events, etc., etc.
- Supports Bible studies and evangelism campaigns with excellent and graphically appealing study materials.
- Supports Pastors who want to do local radio ministry with a "plug and play" option that generates professional local radio shows hosted by the local pastor.
- Provides training resources to church leaders

In May, evangelism and local church leaders traveled to Columbia, Maryland, to participate in the launch of the Discovery Church program and to train the first wave of NNEC pastors in how to use it. Uniquely, the Discovery Church approach is to use the local pastor (or elder, or even youth leader) as the presenter for the evangelism series, so no outside evangelist is needed. This is an advantage because, instead of forming a relationship with an evangelist that then departs, attendees form a relationship with the pastor, who can then continue mentoring and discipling them. With the partnership that has formed between NNEC and VOP, all local churches in the conference are able to seriously contemplate engaging in a robust cyclical evangelism effort.

THE TWO CRITICAL ELEMENTS WE LACK

Evangelism – the untiring proclamation of the Gospel of Christ – is the core mission of our church. The direction to engage in evangelism was given to us by Jesus Himself in Matthew 28:18-20 and His charge was never more urgent than today when we can see prophecy being fulfilled all around us and know there is but a short time left.

So... we're on fire for evangelism, right? We're on a war footing and are dedicating our time, resources, reputations and social contacts to proclaiming Christ, right? The building of Christ's kingdom is the core of our lives, right? Actually, no. Evangelism is making a strong comeback in our conference, but two things do we as a church yet lack. The first of these is a perception of priority, where preparing ourselves and the world for Christ's imminent coming is of infinitely greater importance than any worldly distraction or duty or deception. The second of these is a compelling sense of urgency.

If we had both a sense of priority and an overwhelming sense of urgency, allowing us to break free of our Laodicean state. After all, the Laodicean church was faithful in the small and routine – they were reliable but not ardent. Take a frank assessment of yourself and your church: does the Laodicean description fit us?

So, how do we stop being Laodicean? How do we transform from a church that is doing some evangelism to a church where we members are joyful witnesses to what Christ has done in our lives? Let's start by recognizing that we won't make the



transformation overnight – it will be incremental. Let's also recognize that our sisterhood of churches will make better and faster progress toward this goal if there is a defined pathway, a framework of encouragement. The good news, then, is that these things already exist, and were intentionally designed for the need at hand.

Take another look at the list of turn-key programs offered to the churches by the conference. Each of these programs was designed to make it fun, easy, and rewarding for church members to invite members of their social network to their church. Indian and Mexican food cooking classes? What fun! The Healing Project and Diabetes Reversal programs? Community members need those programs and appreciate them! The Twisted Kingdom series by Bob Cundiff? It strengthens families while opening people's eyes to the great controversy going on all around them. If and as we start inviting our friends and neighbors to the truly useful

programs that have been created, our friends will start asking us spiritual questions and we will experience natural, easy, effective witnessing as we share what we believe.

And here is the thing: As we experience successful evangelism and see people light up as they begin to understand the sin-altered world and understand salvation, as people thank us for introducing them to Christ, we will get hooked and want to experience that again. As a result, we as a church will become more and more eager to share our faith. The priority we put on evangelism will grow, and our sense of urgency will grow to match the lateness of the hour.

Our sisterhood of churches has a message. We have a plan. We have a pathway. Now we need to see God's guidance and blessing through frequent prayer and be about our core mission of proclaiming Christ.



ADVENTURERS IN NNEC

THIS IS WHAT CHILD EVANGELISM LOOKS LIKE

By Rebecca Barcelow

We often say that God is a God of order. But we can also see Him in disorder. For instance, we can see Him in children that are easily distracted by a leaf blowing by, or clouds shifting in the sky. We can see Him in their boundless and sometimes random energy (how come He gave them so much more energy than the adults who are charged with keeping them safe and collected in one group?!). We can even see Him in the chaos that exists when trying to put 10 kids to bed in one cabin!

I guess you can say that we can see God reflected in our children, and this is something we as parents will expend a great deal of time and energy nurturing. One of the most exciting and absolutely fun programs for kids ages four to nine is the Adventurer Club program. This program sets the stage for children to be introduced to the God who loves them more than anyone else, the God



who made the most interesting things in nature for their pure enjoyment, and the God who tells the best stories through the greatest book of all.

Every spring, there is a weekend retreat just for Adventurers. “Spring Escape” is held at Camp Lawroweld the third weekend in May. The theme this year was “God’s Royal Family—Kings and Queens of the Bible”. It was open to all Adventurers (and children in the adventurer age group that don’t have the privilege of belonging to



a club). On Friday night, the rousing song service was led by the worship team from the Upper Valley Christian Fellowship in Hanover, NH. As soon as the last chords died down, a mystery Queen mother showed up to clue kids into what would be happening for the weekend. Then suddenly, from behind the castle wall King Saul appeared. He was dressed in his royal robes and had his crown on. He told us about losing

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BRUNSWICK MAINE OUTREACH SABBATH

By Abigayle Stearman

Brunswick Church in Maine recently held an “Outreach Sabbath” and quite a lot happened. We had four groups that went to different places for outreach. We organized one team for hospital outreach, another for Pathfinder outreach, one for visitation outreach, and finally a team that was assigned with flower outreach.

I was part of the pathfinder outreach team, which I guess is a little self-explanatory – it is Pathfinders and other youth doing acts of service. The team delivered food to help the homeless and then we went to a nursing home and sang to them. I loved seeing the smiles on all the elderly people’s faces. Each of the kids on the team did their own “special music.” Some played piano, some sang, others played clarinet, others ukulele, and still others played flute. Our team was blessed with an abundance of talent!

Seeing people’s smiles in response to the music made the team so happy. I talked to some of the elderly afterwards and they thanked me for coming. I told them, “If we come back, I’ll have another song ready to sing for you!” One lady told me “Don’t say if! Say when!” I replied, “Ok, when we come back, I’ll have another song ready.” After we were done singing, we took the flowers that the Flower Outreach had prepared and handed them out to everyone, which caused still more smiles.

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[Adventurers in NNEC This Is What Child Evangelism Looks Like](#)

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his father’s donkeys and how he reluctantly became king reluctantly.

Sabbath morning we received a visit from the Queen of Sheba. She told us how she brought precious gems as a gift for Solomon. Then there was time for some hands-on learning. We were able to look at different rocks and gems up close through a high-power microscope. We collected rocks and learned about different classes of rocks. We also found out that the breastplate of the high priest and the foundation of the New Jerusalem, and that both contained jewels.

As soon as Sabbath morning worship finished we dashed to our cabins to change into our prince and princess clothes for the banquet hosted by Queen Jezebel and King Ahab. Our lovely meal was interrupted by a bearded Elijah who challenged Jezebel to a showdown at Mount Carmel. When we got to Mount Carmel, the prophets of Baal were pleading and yelling to their god to bring fire down from heaven. After they were unsuccessful, Elijah had the altar doused with water and he

prayed to the one, true God. Thanks to Mike White our engineer, the altar erupted with fire without anyone touching it. This drama will not be soon forgotten by anyone who was in attendance! If you want to see what happened, look up the Facebook page for the Northern New England Conference Adventurer Club.

The afternoon included various, well-dressed kings and queens who were available for a visit. Each Bible character had an activity to help us remember our role in the Bible story. We also continued our study of rocks by cutting some geodes in half and learning about prayer—and we each got a beautiful prayer rock.

Sabbath evening came, and after a short worship service and a visit from King Josiah, it was off to bed with a glow stick scepter or sword. It was evident by all the discussion and questions that the kids had an amazing day and were beyond ready to get some rest if only they could settle down from all the excitement!

Sunday morning, we woke up to find it was raining. We quickly modified our field day games to be indoor games. The kids rotated through different stations that included an obstacle course complete with a

stick horse they had to ride, musical thrones, keep the balloon up, and indoor archery! The morning ended with a servant girl who invited us to the banquet feast that King Jesus will prepare for us in heaven. So many children wanted to be present for that feast!

That is our ultimate goal in Adventurers—to introduce children to the King Jesus. Children graduate from Adventurers to Pathfinders, where they go from learning about Jesus to making a decision for Him. We would encourage those churches without an Adventurer group to strongly consider starting one.

Plan on attending next year’s Adventurer Spring Escape—Bible Superheroes and Wonder Women. You don’t want to miss it!. If you have children ages four to nine, we want to see you there. If you don’t have children this age, but want to be a part of this amazing weekend, we always need adult volunteers who are interested in children’s ministries to make a weekend like this happen.

If you need help starting a club or ideas for meetings, please contact the Adventurer Leadership Team at NNECAdventurers@gmail.com

BEING TRANSFORMED INTO INTENTIONAL AND IMPATIENT MISSIONARIES IN BANGOR

By Ellie Trubey

In March of 2018, the Bangor SDA church came together at a Sunday morning brunch to discuss a topic so many Christian churches across America are wrestling with: how to be obedient to the Gospel commission in a post-Christian world. In other words, how should we best navigate the needs, the questions, and the perspectives of a new generation of seekers? How can we be the body of Christ and effectively impact our communities?

What was birthed that morning, and the summer of prayer and discussion that followed, was a church restart last September.

The restart narrowed down the many traditions, practices, and cultural habits that have for decades made up what we think of as “church” and distilled it to four sets of values: Disciple-Making, Connection and Community, Inclusivity and Recovery, and Creativity—all set within the framework of our beautiful Adventist message and mission.

We resolved that not only our weekly gathering on Sabbath morning, but each day of our lives, would reflect these values. And as we would go into our communities, to our jobs, our families, and our neighbors, viewing ourselves—by God’s grace—as missionaries, sent into a hurting world to live and proclaim the gospel, we would not wait for others to come to us, but we would follow God on His mission in the world.

The engine of the church body is our missional communities. These are smaller groups made up of



The church “restart” has brought an overwhelming sense of community and love to Bangor area.

disciples who gather weekly – outside of the church service – to pray, encourage each other, go deeper into each other’s lives, and bless the neighborhoods and networks to which we’ve been sent. We have found that with our values at the forefront of all we do, even the activities we’ve been doing for years suddenly become sacred acts of worship where we can see divinity at work.

One example of this is when a group of men, including several members of our church, were meeting for a weekly book club at a local restaurant. They began to intentionally get to know their regular server, Jose. He began to ask questions, and eventually asked if he could join their book club! He also began to meet regularly with Pastor Brace, who was a part of the book club, to talk about life and all its challenges.

As their relationship deepened, Jose revealed he was an atheist, but was

interested in learning more about God, and asked if he could attend our church. When Jose observed that, during our service someone tells their story each week, he asked if he could share his story. So in November, Jose, a professed atheist, stood in the Bangor SDA church and declared that God was at work here and he began attending each week. Although he has since moved out of state, he is still in contact with Pastor Brace, and we pray God will continue to pull his heart towards his Creator.

There are many more stories like this of how God is working through His people in undeniable ways as we live among those He is drawing—seeking to regularly bless and serve them with gospel intentionality. To be a part of a church that is awake, dynamic, and relevant has been life-changing. Our goal is to be a part of God’s work in Bangor. And our prayer is that when God asks us to be His light on a hill, to go deep and stay with our community, to feed His lambs, we will say yes!

CARIBOU FELLOWSHIP: A SMALL CHURCH WITH BIG PLANS

By Wayne Smith

Caribou, in extreme northern Maine, is a small community and the Caribou SDA Fellowship is a small church. But here is the thing: it is a small church with big plans. You might say the church has evangelism in its bones. Conrad Vine, president of Adventist Frontier Missions where missionaries specialize in church planting, says that the DNA the founders give a church perpetuate in the church. Caribou SDA Fellowship was born through an evangelism series led by Pastor Rick Kunz in the fall of 2009. Since then it has been actively working to share the gospel with the local community through health meetings, cooking schools, evangelism meetings, camp meetings, YouTube videos, door to door ministry, personal Bible studies, Friday night meetings, and Bible workers. The church has been busy!

The local community has an openness to healthy lifestyle messages. The church holds several free cooking schools each year. Last summer, the youth of the church led out in one. Tim Howe, Richard Hansen, Chad Kreuzer, and Jai Hewlett have shared their knowledge and expertise with health talks. These meetings have given the church a chance to meet and to become friends with the attendees. The evangelistic meetings seem to work best when bridged to a health series. In fact, one of the Bible workers traces his membership this way.

Since the founding evangelism outreach in 2009, the Fellowship has held multiple evangelism series. Gabriel Arruda presented a series in the spring of 2016 and was followed by Luis Torres in the fall. Chad Kreuzer held a series in the fall of 2017. He was followed with a video series by Charles Byrd called



The Caribou SDA church standing out on a beautiful day.

“Thunder in the Holy Land”. And as I write this, David Baron is presenting a Prophecy Countdown series to good attendance.

Since 2016, the small church has financed Bible workers to reach out to the Caribou community. Hartland College students, together with

local member Bible workers, have actively worked the area, going door to door and offering Bible studies, prayer, and help where help was needed, and transporting those with travel limitations to church. Many of the current attendees at Prophecy Countdown are a result of their labors.

The Fellowship has experimented with evangelism, even erecting a tent alongside a major highway. This winter, the elders presented a series using local banners, flyers, and television for advertising. While no one committed to baptism, an average of 8-10 visitors attended each night. Combining mailers, FaceBook, TV, flyers, banners, road signs, personal invitations, and a professional evangelist, the current series has been averaging 18-20 visitors per night – a big number for a small church in a small town!

To date, the best method of advertising by far has been friendship evangelism. David Baron says, “If every member would seek to bring one friend with them to the meeting, there would be no need to advertise.” At the Fellowship, there has been a concerted effort to get each member



The prophecy seminar was a huge success!

involved with evangelism!

God has blessed the Caribou SDA Fellowship with a diverse group of loving members that welcome visitors

and seek to share the lifechanging Three Angels’ Messages with those who come through its doors. Evangelism is not something we just do, it’s in our bones.

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The visitation effort actually had two groups, and one of those visited people who couldn’t get out very often. They visited many people, including neighbors who weren’t part of the church. One of these was a woman who had moved in a few weeks prior but hadn’t been able to set up her bed and so had been sleeping on her couch. The team visited with her while they set up her bed.

The hospital outreach team asked the church to donate treats such cookies, fruit, flowers and bread. These they assembled into baskets for nurse’s stations at Midcoast Hospital. The team handed the baskets to nurses and thanked them for their work. Each basket had a special flourish made possible by the flower outreach team, who spent hours and hours laboring on the project.



Mid-Coast Hospital staff joyfully pose for a picture after receiving their appreciation gift.

The goal of Outreach Sabbath was to reach out to those in need of Jesus, or just want some company. It wasn’t for all the “thank you’s” or “oh you didn’t have to do this!” that drove the teams. They did it because in Matthew 28:18-20 it says “Go therefore into all

nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to obey everything I’ve taught you” (NIV simplified). We did it because God asks us to be an example to others. We did it to shine our light!

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